



No.196 Rs.3.00

# HOTHAL

BASED ON A FAMOUS BALLAD FROM GUJARAT





There are stories in the Vedas and Puranas of apsaras or celestial nymphs becoming infatuated with mortals. But, in this folk-tale from Kutch, the apsara, Hothal, is fond of the earth itself. However, when she incurs the displeasure of Indra and is born in the world of mortals, chance brings her face to face with Odha. Their love is the theme of this story.

Apsaras are known for their beauty and fragility. But Hothal combined beauty with bravery. In fact, it was her valour which won Odha's admiration. It came as a surprise to him that the 'young man' who had won his heart, was a woman in disguise.

Even to this day the poignant story of Hothal and Odha is popular all over Gujarat.

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# HOTHAL



HOTHAL, THE BEAUTIFUL APSARA,\* HAD JUST SPENT A BRIEF PERIOD IN BHARAT,† WHERE MORTALS LIVE. SHE WAS NOW RETURNING TO AMARAVATI, THE ABODE OF THE GODS.

HOTHAL JOINED HER FRIENDS IN THEIR LIFE OF AIMLESS MERRIMENT BUT SHE FOUND NO PLEASURE IN IT. SHE LONGED TO GO BACK TO BHARAT.

HOTHAL,  
WHY ARE YOU  
SO SAD?

IT IS SO  
WEARING HERE!  
PEOPLE ON  
EARTH ARE SO  
HAPPY.

HOW CAN THAT BE?  
THEY HAVE TO TOIL  
ON EARTH.

THEY DO, BUT  
THAT'S THE SECRET  
OF THEIR  
HAPPINESS.





THEY WORK HARD THROUGHOUT THE DAY...



...AND IN THE EVENING THEY SING AND DANCE.



IT IS WORK  
WHICH MAKES THE LEISURE  
THAT FOLLOWS SO  
PLEASANT.

OH,  
I SEE!

LET'S GET ON  
WITH THE DANCE.  
COME ON! HURRY!



HOTHAL WATCHED  
SILENTLY AS HER  
FRIENDS JOINED  
THE OTHERS.

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND  
ME HERE ANY MORE. I WISH  
I WERE BACK IN BHARAT.





ONE DAY HOTHAL WAS DANCING BEFORE INDRA, THE LORD OF THE DEVAS. SHE RECREATED THE BEAUTIFUL SCENES SHE HAD SEEN IN BHARAT AND THE AUDIENCE WAS IN RAPTURES.

EXQUISITE!

HOTHAL IS ONE OF OUR BEST DANCERS!



SUDDENLY, SHE STOPPED DANCING AND STOOD QUITE STILL.

SHE IS LOST IN HER MEMORIES.

SHE HANKERS ALL THE TIME FOR BHARAT.



COMING OUT OF HER REVERIE, HOTHAL REALISED THAT INDRA WAS ENRAGED.

CLEARLY, YOU ARE NOT HAPPY HERE. I AM GOING TO SEND YOU BACK TO EARTH.



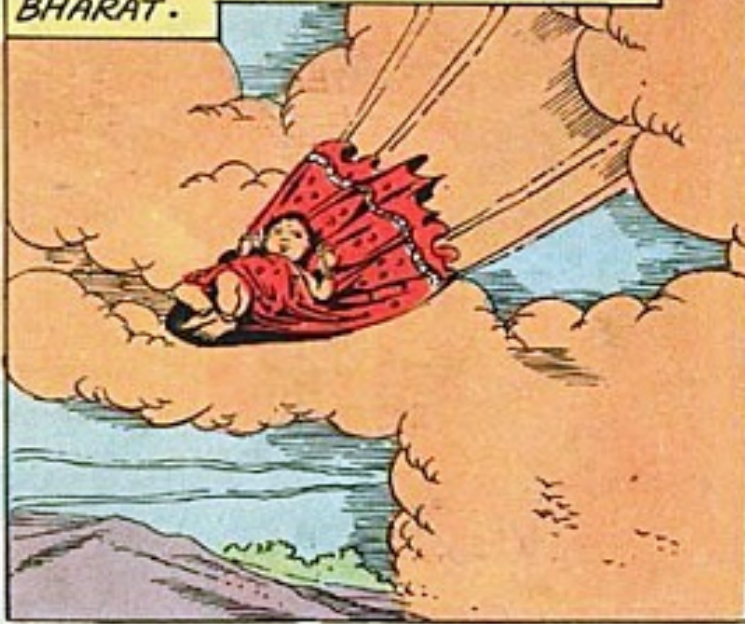
LORD, I CAN ONLY DO AS YOU ORDER.

BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO COME BACK IF YOUR ORIGIN IS DISCLOSED BY YOUR LOVED ONES.





THE NEXT MOMENT HOTHAL WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A BABY AND FOUND HERSELF CARRIED TO BHARAT.



THE KING OF A SMALL PRINCIPALITY IN WESTERN GUJARAT FOUND THE BABY.

POOR BABY! IT'S QUITE ALONE!



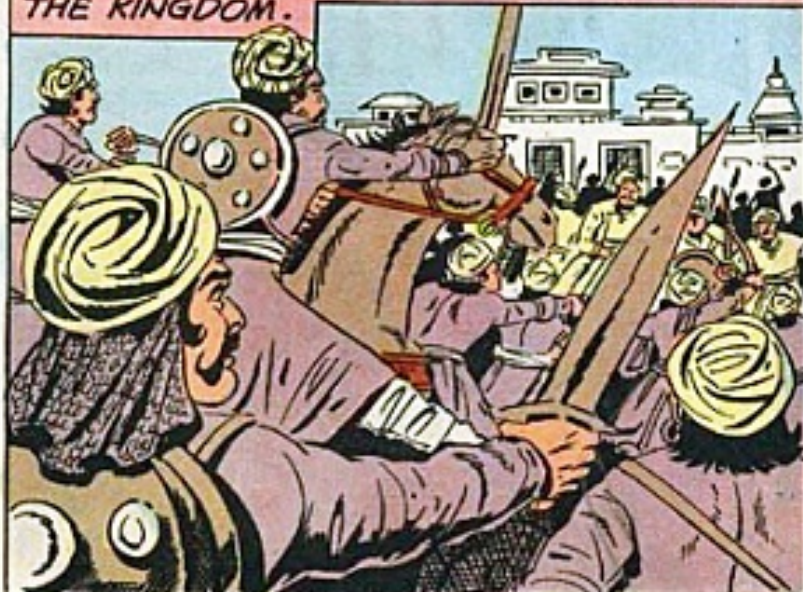
THE KING TOOK THE BABY HOME.

A FEW YEARS PASSED HAPPILY.

SHE GROWS PRETTIER EVERY DAY!



THEN, SUDDENLY, BAMBHANIYA BADSHAH OF SINDH ATTACKED AND RANSACKED THE KINGDOM.



EVERYONE PERISHED; ONLY THE KING AND HOTHAL MANAGED TO ESCAPE.





THEY FOUND SHELTER IN A CAVE ON MOUNT KANARA.

BAMBHANIYA! ONE DAY I WILL MAKE YOU PAY FOR THIS!



THE KING AND HOTHAL LIVED ALONE IN THE JUNGLE. HE TAUGHT HOTHAL SWORD FIGHTING...

YOU'RE GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY!



...AND ARCHERY.



THE YEARS WENT BY AND HOTHAL GREW INTO A YOUNG WOMAN. HER FATHER, WHO WAS NOW GETTING OLD, WAS WORRIED ABOUT HER FUTURE.

HOTHAL, YOU HAVE HELPED ME BEAR MY MISFORTUNES. BUT WHO IN TURN WILL CONSOLE YOU WHEN I DIE?



WE ARE HAPPY TOGETHER NOW, FATHER. LET THE FUTURE TAKE CARE OF ITSELF!

I HAD HOPED TO SEE YOU HAPPILY MARRIED....



AM I A BURDEN TO YOU, FATHER?





HUSH! YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF MY OLD AGE, CHILD.

THEN LET'S NOT TALK OF MARRIAGE AGAIN! I WON'T LEAVE YOU; AND NO YOUNG MAN WOULD AGREE TO SHARE OUR LIFE HERE.

THEIR LIFE CONTINUED IN ITS EVEN PACE BUT THE KING WHO KNEW HIS END WAS NEAR, GREW DEJECTED.

WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU, FATHER? PLEASE TELL ME.

MY DEAREST WISH HAS REMAINED UNFULFILLED.



WHAT WISH, FATHER?

TO AVENGE THE RAVAGING OF MY KINGDOM.

I WILL DO IT FOR YOU, FATHER, I PROMISE!

I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD, HOTHAL. THAT'S WHY I TAUGHT YOU ALL THE ARTS OF WAR.



SOME DAYS LATER, THE OLD KING DIED, LEAVING HOTHAL ALL ALONE.

I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN MY PROMISE, FATHER. BAMBHANIYA WILL TASTE DEFEAT.





HOTHAL LOST NO TIME IN CARRYING OUT HER MISSION. DISGUISED AS A YOUNG RAJPUT, SHE JOURNEYED TOWARDS NAGAR SAMOI, A PLACE IN SINDH.



HOTHAL  
THERE WAS ANOTHER PERSON ALSO HEADING TOWARDS SINDH — ODHAJAM OF KUTCH.\*



BAMBHANIYA'S CAMELS ARE SO WELL GUARDED, IT WILL BE HARD TO LURE THEM OUT.

HARD, ODHA? HARD FOR YOU WHOSE BRAVERY IS WELL KNOWN IN GUJARAT, RAJASTHAN AND SINDH?

AT MIDDAY ODHA CAMPED NEAR A LAKE. AFTER A WHILE, HE HEARD HIS MEN TALKING —



LOOK AT THAT ELEGANT YOUNG MAN.

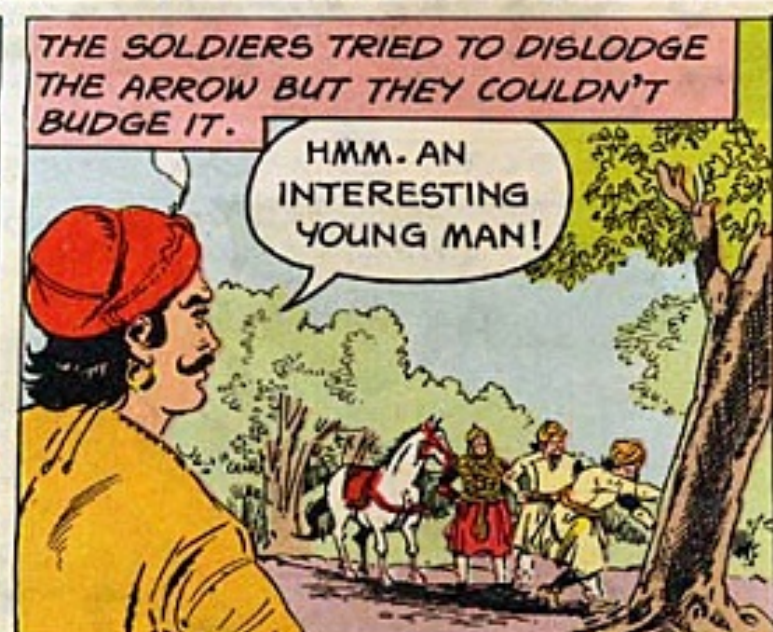
LET'S ROB HIM OF HIS BELONGINGS.

BUT EVEN AS ODHA GOT UP TO INTERVENE —



THERE IS NO NEED TO ROB ME! ALL I HAVE IS YOURS IF...







AS ODHA CAME UP TO THEM —

DO YOU WISH TO TRY YOUR HAND AT IT ?

NO, BUT WHY DON'T YOU ?

THE YOUNG 'RAJPUT' PULLED OUT THE ARROW WITH EASE.



BRAVO!

WELL DONE, YOUNG MAN. TELL ME, WHO ARE YOU ?



HOTHAL HID HER TRUE IDENTITY.

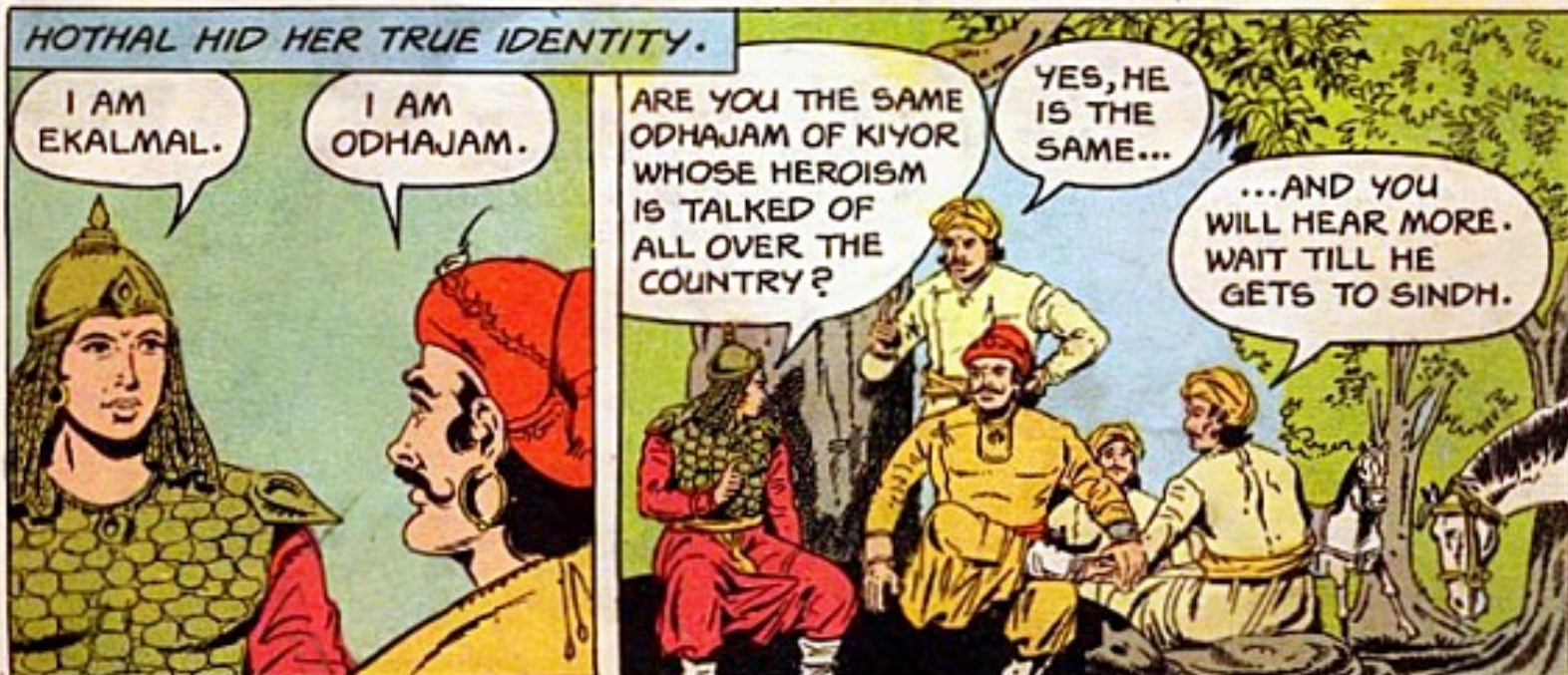
I AM EKALMAL.

I AM ODHAJAM.

ARE YOU THE SAME ODHAJAM OF KIYOR WHOSE HEROISM IS TALKED OF ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ?

YES, HE IS THE SAME...

...AND YOU WILL HEAR MORE. WAIT TILL HE GETS TO SINDH.



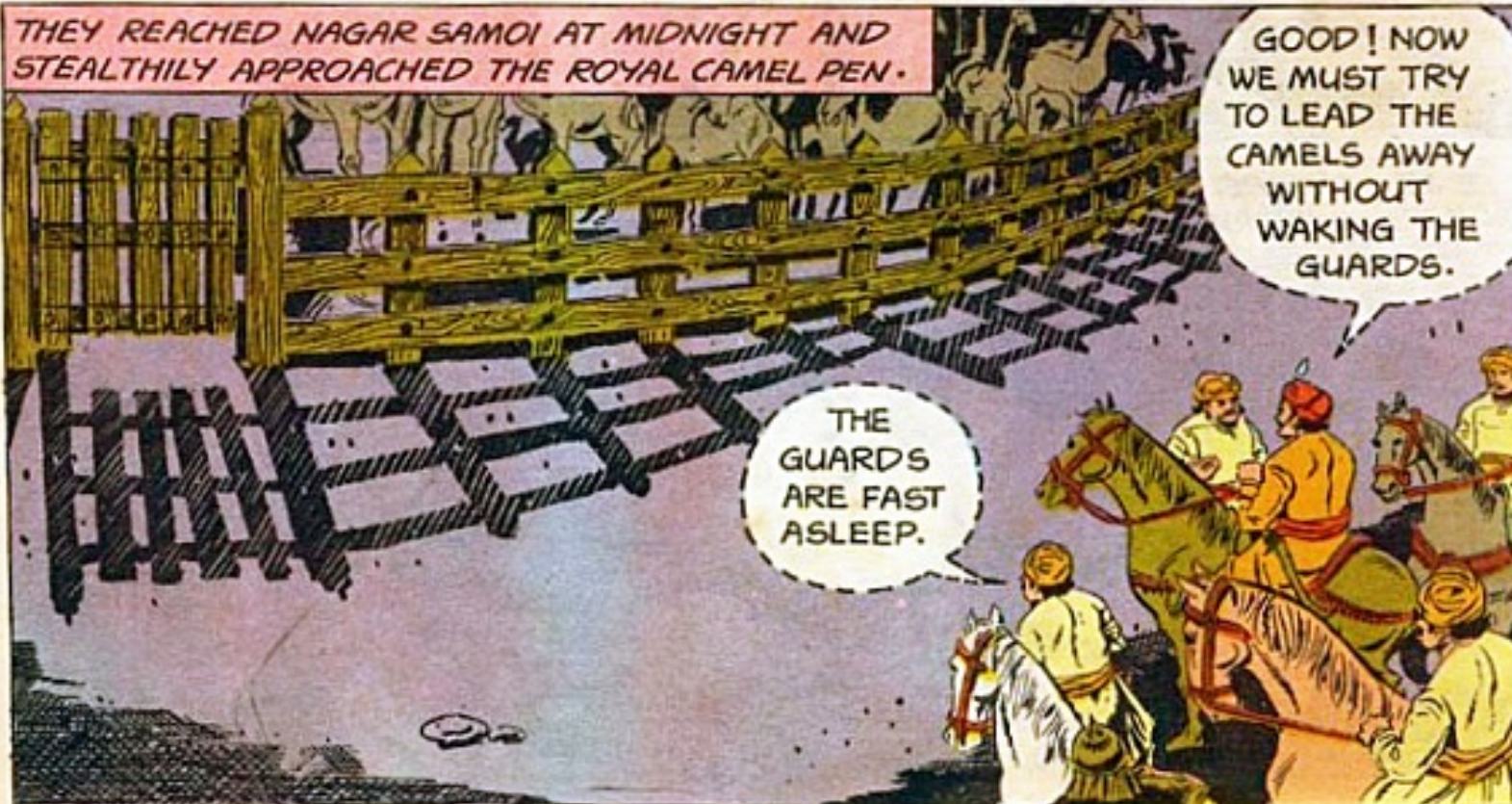








THEY REACHED NAGAR SAMOI AT MIDNIGHT AND STEALTHILY APPROACHED THE ROYAL CAMEL PEN.







EKAL BENT DOWN AND RAISED THE GATE ON HIS BACK.



THE MEN ENTERED THE PEN AND TRIED TO LEAD THE CAMELS OUT, BUT THEY REFUSED TO OBEY THE STRANGERS.







EKAL LIGHTLY PRICKED THE BACK OF A CAMEL WITH AN ARROW TO GET A FEW DROPS OF BLOOD, WHICH HE MOPPED UP WITH A CLOTH. HE THEN WRAPPED THE CLOTH ROUND A SPEAR AND HELD IT UP TO THE NOSE OF THE CAMEL.



SMELLING ITS OWN BLOOD, THE CAMEL FOLLOWED EKALMAL.



THE NEXT MOMENT ALL THE CAMELS FOLLOWED THEIR LEADER.





THE MEN LED THE CAMELS AWAY. EKAL AND ODHAJAM TURNED TO DEAL WITH THE GUARDS...



...WHOM THEY SOON VANQUISHED.



BAMBHANIYA WILL CERTAINLY PURSUE US NOW!

THAT'S JUST WHAT WE WANT!

BUT WITH ALL THOSE CAMELS...! THEY'LL SLOW US DOWN.

OH, THE CAMELS! ASK YOUR MEN TO TAKE THEM AWAY AND WAIT FOR US AT THE CROSS-ROAD. WE'LL MEET THEM THERE AFTER DEALING WITH BAMBHANIYA.



AS ODHA'S MEN DEPARTED, THE TWO FRIENDS WAITED FOR THE ENEMY.



SEE THAT CLOUD OF DUST? THAT MUST BE BAMBHANIYA'S ARMY APPROACHING.



ODHA WAS FILLED WITH ANGER. AS BAMBHANIYA APPROACHED HIS RAGE MOUNTED.

EKAL! TELL BAMBHANIYA TO GO BACK; OR HIS WIFE WILL BECOME A WIDOW.

NO, ODHA! LET HIM COME! WE MUST TEACH HIM A LESSON.



EKAL MOVED LIKE A WHIRLWIND AND KILLED EVERY SOLDIER WHO STOOD IN HIS WAY.

HE EVEN MANAGED TO SHOOT DOWN THE CANOPY OF BAMBHANIYA'S CHARIOT.

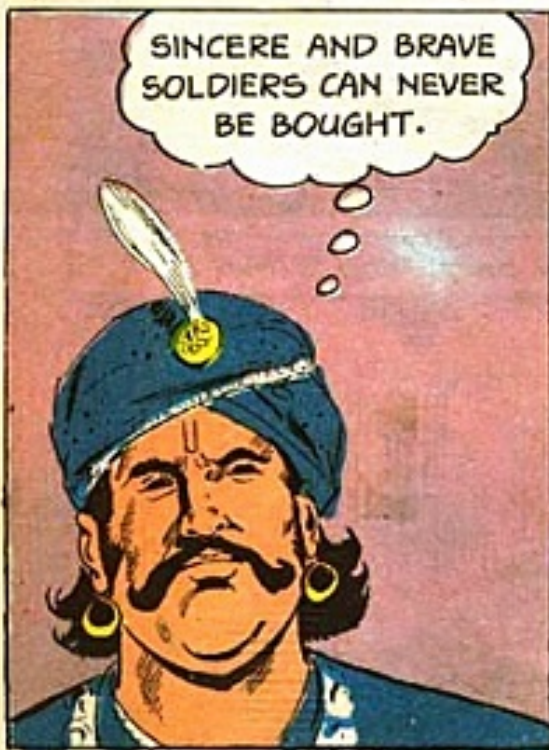


BEFORE BAMBHANIYA'S SOLDIERS COULD PICK UP THE FALLEN CANOPY, EKAL SNATCHED IT UP...

...AND RODE SAFELY BACK TO HIS OWN SIDE.

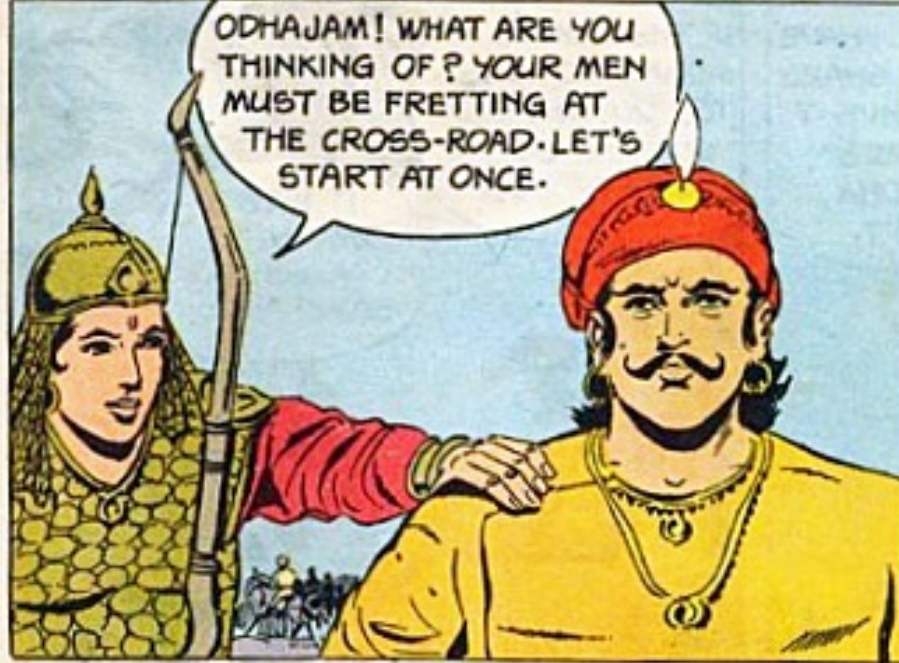








ODHAJAM! WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF? YOUR MEN MUST BE FRETTING AT THE CROSS-ROAD. LET'S START AT ONCE.



THEY REACHED THE SPOT WHERE ODHA'S SOLDIERS WERE WAITING.

WE HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE TASK OF SHARING THE CAMELS.



ODHA NOTICED THAT THE CAMELS ON ONE SIDE WERE ROBUST WHILE THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE LOOKED RATHER WEAK.

THOSE CAMELS ARE YOURS, EKALMAL.

IT'S NOT FAIR TO OFFER EKAL THE WORST CAMELS.



MOUNTING HIS HORSE, ODHA RODE THROUGH THE CENTRE OF EACH GROUP OF CAMELS, THUS DIVIDING THEM INTO TWO FURTHER EQUAL SHARES.

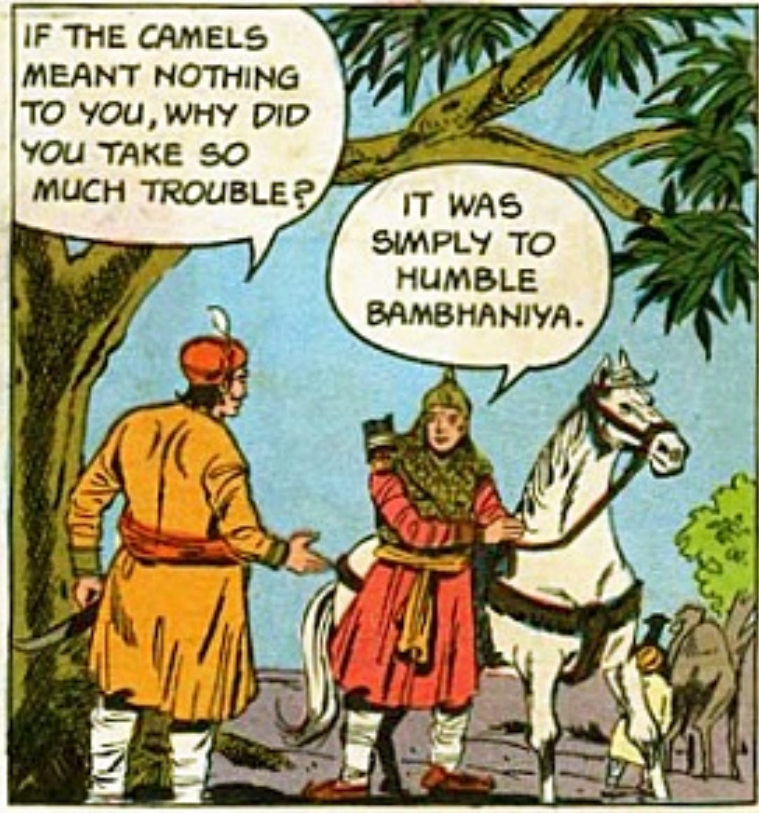






NOW YOU CAN TAKE YOUR SHARE, EKAL.

THANK YOU. I HAVE RECEIVED MY SHARE AND NOW I GIVE IT TO MY DEAREST FRIEND, ODHA, AS A GIFT.



IF THE CAMELS MEANT NOTHING TO YOU, WHY DID YOU TAKE SO MUCH TROUBLE?

IT WAS SIMPLY TO HUMBLE BAMBHANIYA.



THE DEPARTED SOUL OF MY FATHER MUST BE AT PEACE NOW.



ODHAJAM! WE MUST PART NOW. GOODBYE!



GOODBYE, EKAL! DON'T FORGET YOUR ODHA.

HOW COULD I FORGET YOU, ODHA! I WILL BE LIKE THE BABIDI BIRD IN THE DESERT AND CALL OUT YOUR NAME ALL MY LIFE!



THEN EKAL CONTROLLED HIS FEELINGS.

DON'T FORGET  
TO INVITE ME  
WHEN YOU GET  
MARRIED!

I'LL INVITE  
YOU! BUT  
I DON'T KNOW  
WHERE YOU  
LIVE.

WHENEVER  
YOU NEED ME,  
COME TO MOUNT  
KANARA AND  
CALL ME!

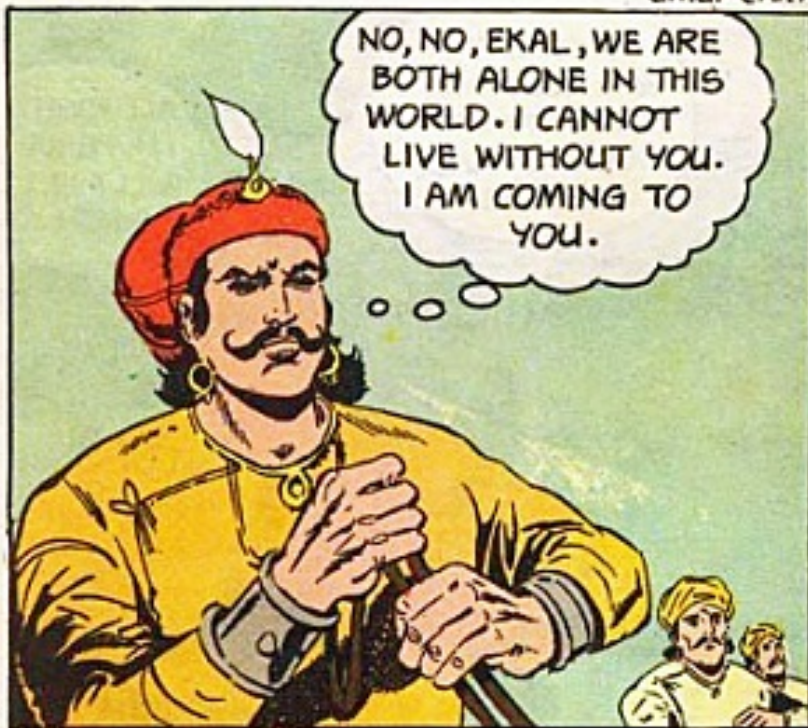
ALL RIGHT.  
I HOPE WE  
WILL MEET  
AGAIN.

I FEEL I HAVE  
LOST SOMETHING  
VERY PRECIOUS.

I WILL NEVER  
FORGET YOU, EKAL!  
YOUR FRIENDSHIP  
IS VERY DEAR  
TO ME.

BUT ONE THING  
PUZZLES ME. HOW  
IS IT YOU TALKED  
TO ME LIKE A  
WOMAN WHEN  
WE PARTED?





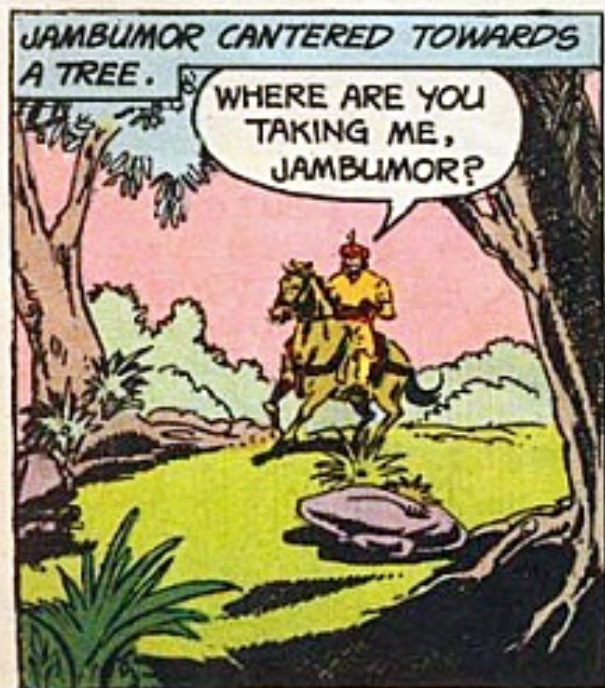
HE CALLED HIS SOLDIERS.



THE HORSE, JAMBUMOR, BORE ODHA SEVERAL MILES AWAY, TO A LAKE CALLED CHAKHASAR.



H-N..WN.



JAMBUMOR CANTERED TOWARDS A TREE.



THAT IS EKAL'S HORSE! AND THOSE ARE HIS BELONGINGS! MY FRIEND MUST BE NEAR!



WANDERING AROUND IN SEARCH OF EKALMAL,  
ODHA CLIMBED UP A MOUND.

THERE IS EKAL  
BATHING IN THE  
LAKE. OH, NO,  
IT'S A WOMAN!



DON'T STARE  
SO HARD. PLEASE  
GO AWAY AND  
LET ME COME  
OUT AND  
DRESS.

OH! I AM  
SORRY.



I WAS LOOKING  
FOR MY FRIEND,  
EKALMAL. HAVE  
YOU SEEN HIM?

YES! HE HAS GONE  
TO THE OTHER SIDE  
OF MOUNT KANARA.



ODHA WENT IN THE DIRECTION SHE HAD INDICATED.

EKALMAL! THIS  
IS YOUR FRIEND,  
ODHA! WHERE  
ARE YOU?





THERE WAS NO REPLY.

WELL, HE DOESN'T ANSWER? A FINE FRIEND YOU HAVE, ODHA!

YOU...YOU KNOW MY NAME...AND YOU LOOK LIKE EKAL! WHO ARE YOU?



LOOK CLOSELY AT MY FACE. DON'T YOU KNOW ME?

YOU ARE EKAL!



I WAS CERTAIN YOU WOULD COME TO LOOK FOR YOUR LONELY FRIEND!

BUT! DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW....



LET ME EXPLAIN. MY NAME IS HOTHAL....



AND SHE TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY, BEGINNING WITH HER BANISHMENT BY INDRA.

YOUR HISTORY MAKES YOU EVEN MORE IRRESISTIBLE, HOTHAL. I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

I WILL, ODHA, IF YOU WILL PROMISE ME ONE THING!





YOU MUST NOT DISCLOSE THE SECRET OF MY ORIGIN TO ANYONE. IF YOU DO, I WILL HAVE TO RETURN TO AMARAVATI AND YOU WILL LOSE ME. WILL YOU GIVE ME YOUR WORD?

YES, HOTHAL, I PROMISE.

ODHA MARRIED HOTHAL.

THEY WERE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER. WITH THEIR TWO SONS, JAKHARA AND JESSAL, WHO WERE LATER BORN TO THEM, THEY LIVED A PEACEFUL LIFE IN THE FORESTS.

MANY YEARS PASSED. ONE DAY —

WHAT'S THE MATTER, ODHAMAM? WHY DO YOU LOOK SO SAD!

HE HAS BEEN SITTING LIKE THIS FOR HOURS, MOTHER.



JUST THEN THE LOUD CRY OF PEACOCKS WAS HEARD —



...AND, HOTHAL, THEY  
REMINDE ME OF MY CHILDHOOD.  
I MISS MY HOMELAND. I WANT  
TO VISIT KUTCH AGAIN!

WHY, ODHAJAM?  
AREN'T YOU HAPPY  
WITH US?



A MAN NEVER FORGETS  
HIS HOMELAND. I AM LIKE  
A SLEEPLESS CHILD,  
HOTHAL, WHO LONGS FOR  
ITS MOTHER'S LAP.

THEN LET'S  
GO TO KUTCH,  
DEAR ODHAJAM,  
IF IT WILL MAKE  
YOU HAPPY.

THEY STARTED ON THE JOURNEY AT  
ONCE. AS THEY NEARED KUTCH, ODHA'S  
DELIGHT INCREASED.

AH! THAT'S THE  
BORDER OF MY HOME-  
LAND! DON'T YOU FEEL  
THAT THESE CLOUDS,  
BIRDS, ANIMALS AND  
TREES ARE WEL-  
COMING US?

YES,  
ODHA.





BUT WILL YOUR  
PEOPLE ALSO  
WELCOME YOU?

OF COURSE, HOTHAL.  
THE PEOPLE LOVED  
ME AND SANG  
OF MY EXPLOITS.



ODHA, YOU GO  
AHEAD NOW. WE'LL  
WAIT HERE TILL  
YOU CALL US.

THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.  
I'LL COME BACK SOON. WAIT  
TILL YOU SEE HOW THE  
PEOPLE GREET ME. YOU'LL  
HEAR THEIR SHOUTS  
EVEN HERE!



BUT WHEN HE ARRIVED IN KUTCH, HE WAS NOT  
RECOGNISED.

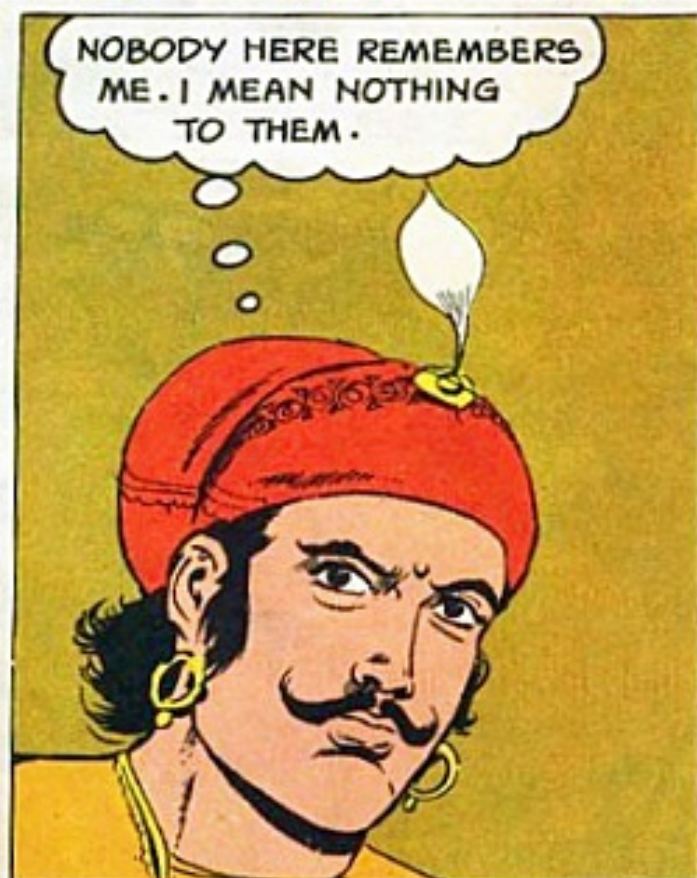
WHO'S  
THAT  
MAN?

MUST  
BE A NEW-  
COMER!

BEWARE  
OF  
STRAN-  
GERS!



NOBODY HERE REMEMBERS  
ME. I MEAN NOTHING  
TO THEM.

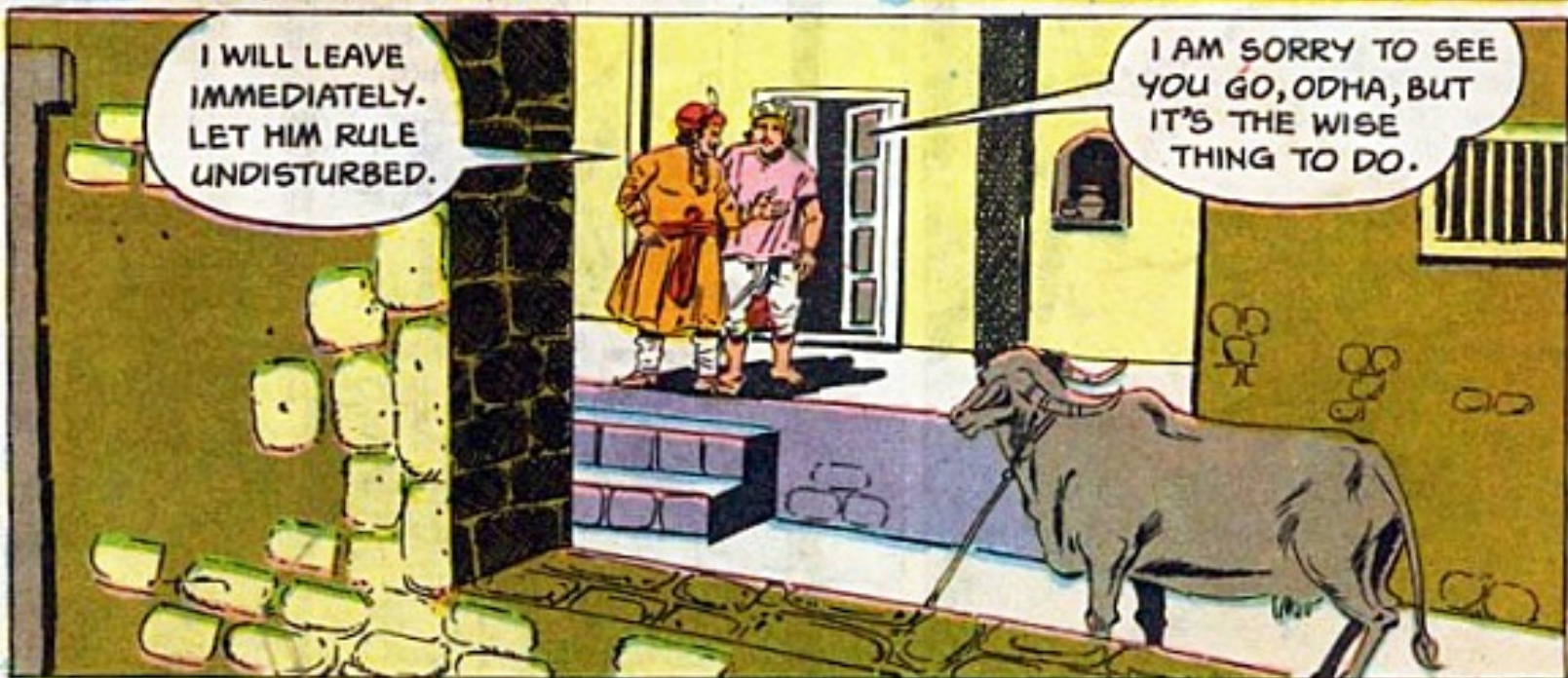
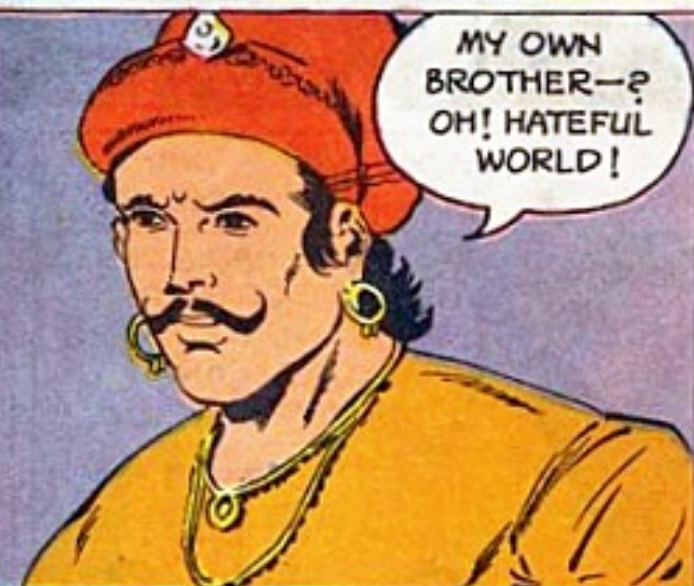




SUDDENLY —









ODHA RETURNED IMMEDIATELY TO HOTHAL AND HIS SONS, AND TOLD THEM ABOUT HIS BROTHER.

IT WASN'T A GOOD IDEA TO COME HERE.



WHERE SHALL WE GO NOW?

TO PIRANA PATAN, TO MY COUSIN, VISHAL DEV.

OH, AT LAST WE ARE TO MEET HIM! WE HAVE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT HIM FROM YOU, FATHER!



IN PIRANA PATAN, VISHAL DEV RECEIVED ODHA WITH AFFECTION.

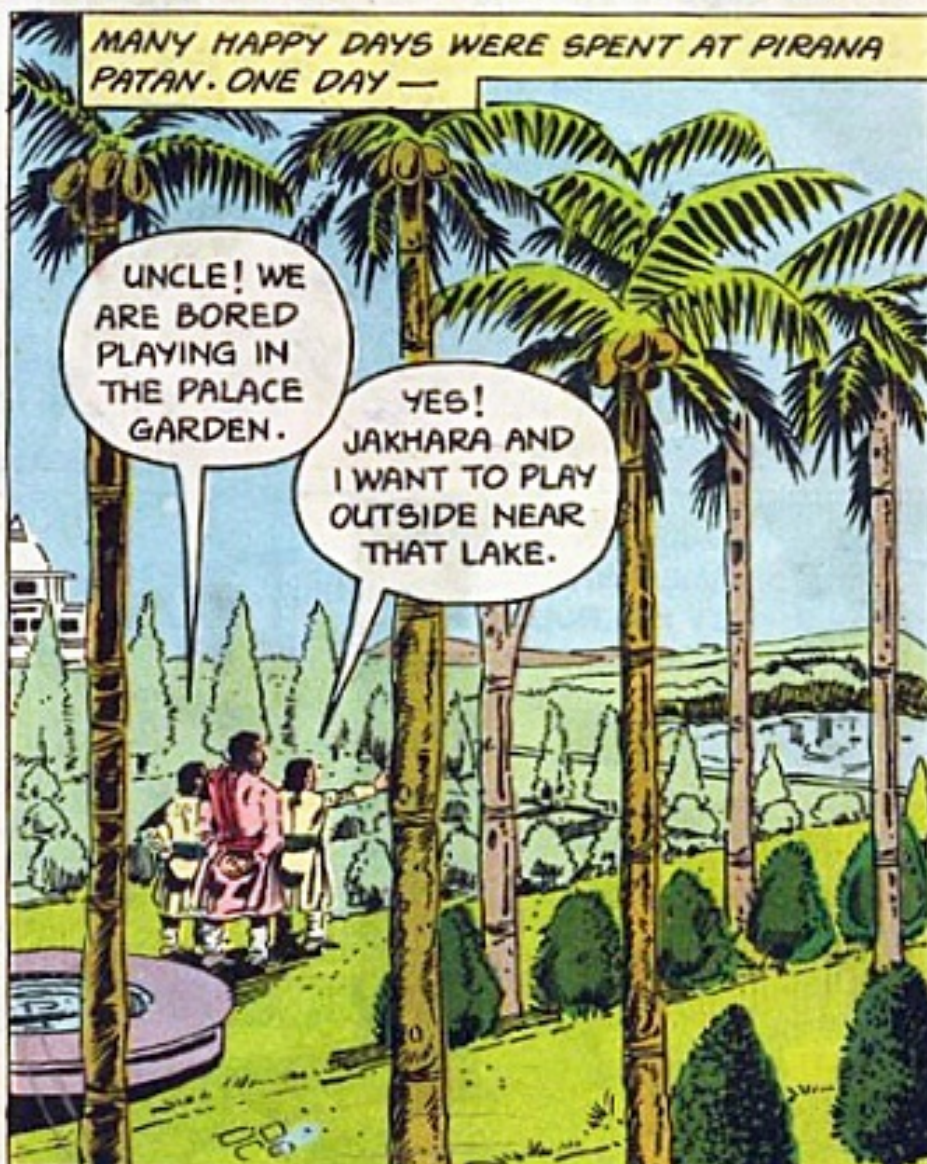
ODHA! I HAD GIVEN UP HOPE OF EVER SEEING YOU. YOU ARE WELCOME— AND YOUR FAMILY TOO.



MANY HAPPY DAYS WERE SPENT AT PIRANA PATAN. ONE DAY —

UNCLE! WE ARE BORED PLAYING IN THE PALACE GARDEN.

YES! JAKHARA AND I WANT TO PLAY OUTSIDE NEAR THAT LAKE.





NO, CHILDREN! THAT  
IS THE HAUNT OF A  
MAN-EATING LION.



YOU HEARD THAT,  
JESSAL! DON'T YOU  
FEEL IT'S A  
CHALLENGE?

YES,  
JAKHARA!  
WE MUST  
KILL THAT  
LION!



THE TWO BROTHERS SNEAKED INTO THE JUNGLE EQUIPPED WITH BOWS AND ARROWS.

LOOK, THE  
LION!

HEY!  
HEY!



HEARING THEM APPROACH, THE LION  
ROARED AND WAS POISED TO JUMP  
WHEN —



GOT HIM!  
STRAIGHT IN  
THE HEART!





THE NEWS SPREAD ROUND THE TOWN LIKE WILDFIRE. THIS INCIDENT CREATED A SENSATION IN THE PALACE TOO. AT THE ROYAL COURT —

BRAVE BOYS!

AFTER ALL, THEIR FATHER IS ODHA.

AND NO DOUBT THEIR MOTHER COMES FROM SOME BRAVE FAMILY TOO.



TO WHICH FAMILY DOES SHE BELONG?

I DON'T KNOW. LET'S ASK HIM.



ODHAJAM! WHO IS THE MOTHER OF THESE BRAVE BOYS?



THEY ARE NEPHEWS OF THE GREAT JHALAS ....

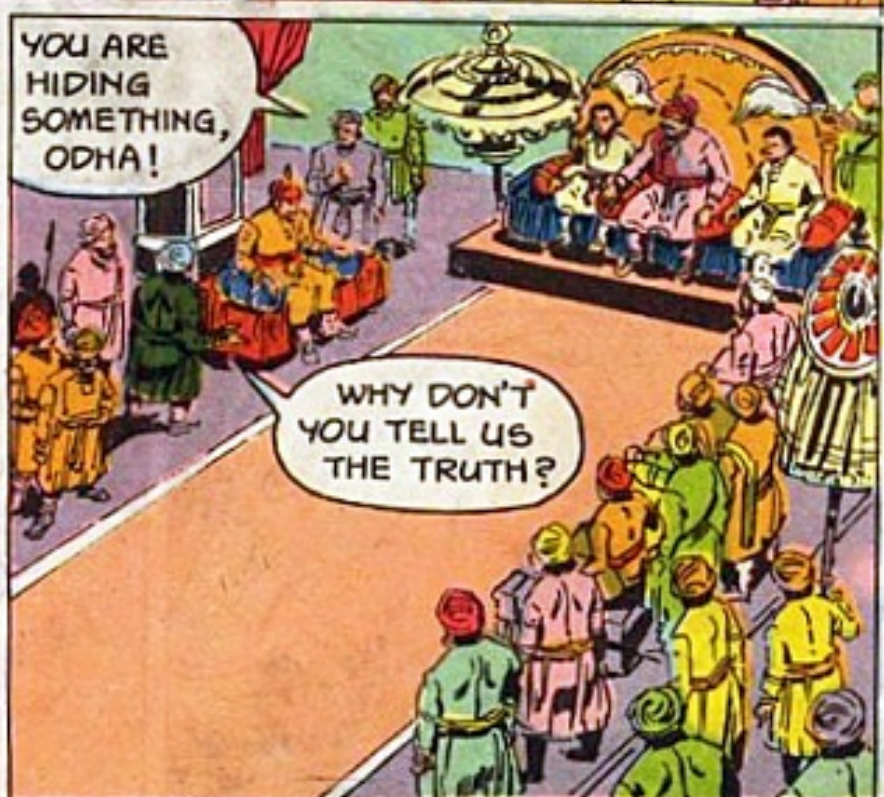
THE JHALAS...?

HA, HA! THERE IS NO SUCH FAMILY, ODHA.



YOU ARE HIDING SOMETHING, ODHA!

WHY DON'T YOU TELL US THE TRUTH?





THE BOYS FELT HUMILIATED AND DREW THEIR SWORDS TO ATTACK THE COURTIER.

FATHER, OUR HONOUR IS AT STAKE. IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH OUR MOTHER'S FAMILY?

TELL THE TRUTH OR ALL OF US WILL HAVE TO DIE!



HOW CAN I TELL THE TRUTH AND LOSE HOTHAL? BUT IF I DON'T, MY SONS' LINEAGE WILL BE UNDER A CLOUD.



SONS! DON'T INSIST UPON KNOWING THE TRUTH OR YOU WILL REPENT!



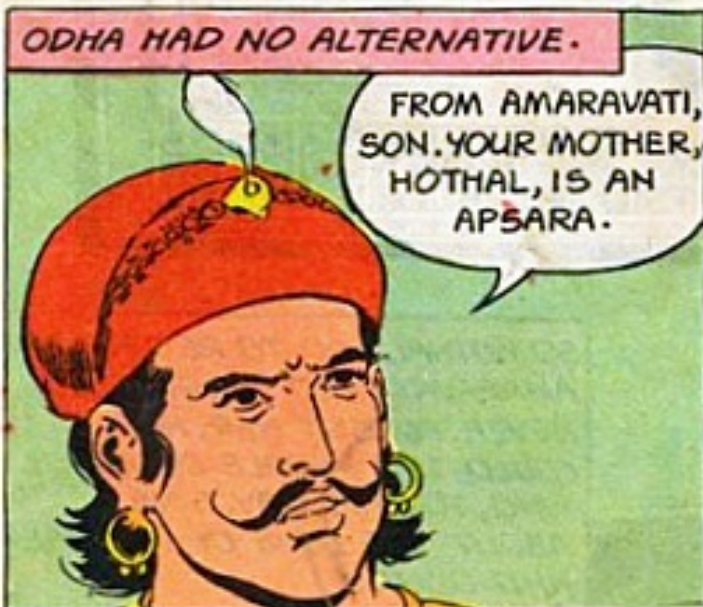
IT DOESN'T MATTER! A BAD NAME IS WORSE THAN DEATH.

SPEAK, FATHER, WHERE DOES OUR MOTHER COME FROM?



ODHA HAD NO ALTERNATIVE.

FROM AMARAVATI, SON. YOUR MOTHER, HOTHAL, IS AN APSARA.



AN APSARA! HOTHAL IS AN APSARA!

AH, THAT'S WHY YOUR SONS ARE SO BRAVE.





THEIR PRAISE FELL ON ODHA'S EARS  
LIKE THUNDERING DRUM BEATS.

HOW  
FORTUNATE  
YOU ARE,  
ODHA!



HIS WORST FEARS CAME TRUE. WHEN HE  
RUSHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENT —

FORGIVE  
ME,  
HOTHAL.

OH, ODHA,  
YOU HAVE  
JUST SOUNDED  
MY DOOM!



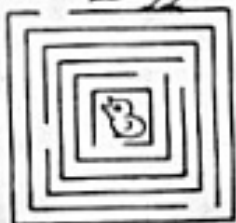
GOODBYE,  
MY BELOVED  
ODHA!



SO HOTHAL HAD TO RETURN TO  
AMARAVATI. BUT ODHA COULD  
NEVER FORGET HER, NOR  
COULD THE PEOPLE OF KUTCH  
WHO, TO THIS DAY, SING  
ABOUT THE LOVE OF HOTHAL  
AND ODHA.



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THE CROW**



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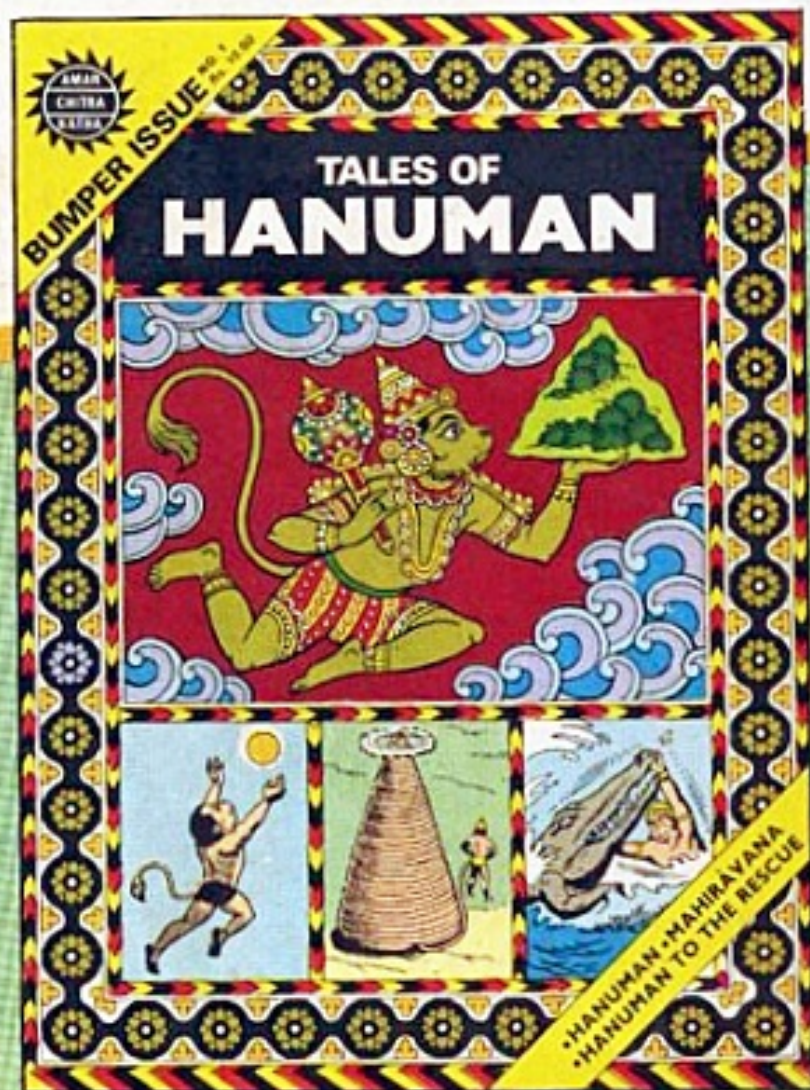
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